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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, August 5, 1932.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "A New England Clam Bake." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Nobody need tell me that we Americans have no traditions. Nobody need tell me that we don't enjoy old customs handed down through the generations. And nobody need tell me that every different part of this country doesn't have its own special traditions and customs, especially about food. For I know better.

One day last spring I happened to be on a committee of women here in Washington, D. C. who were planning a big community gathering and picnic. Women from many different states of the union were on that committee. The question up for discussion was: What to have to eat and how to serve it?

The lady from Texas spoke first.

"When we have big outdoor meals in Texas, we always have barbecues," said she. "Beef barbecues are customary all through the Southwest, you know."

"Then a member from the banks of the Missouri spoke up. She said fish fries were the traditional feast in her part of the world.

"But," said the lady from Mississippi, "there's nothing so good as a big old squirrel stew. That's what folks in Mississippi think, anyway."

"Or a nice chicken barbecue," added another lady from the South.

"Finally it was the New England member's turn to speak.

"Along Cape Cod and all the way up the New England coast, we have our clam bakes. And nothing in the world tastes any better to me than a good clam bake."

Isn't that proof enough that we Americans have our traditions, whatever part of the country we come from?

I've never been to a real New England clam bake. But Miss Medora Ward over in the Bureau of Home Economics, whose home is in Rhode Island, and who has been to clam bakes all her life, described to me the other day just what these feasts are like. She tells me that often when New England churches or clubs or communities have their summer get-togethers near the shore or the beach, they spread long tables out under the trees and prepare a clam bake outdoors.

Would you like to hear the menu for a traditional clam bake? I'll give you the menu first. And then I'll tell you how to cook the different foods.

The soup course comes first. Needless to say, this is clam chowder. Crackers to go with it? Yes. New Englanders serve hard tack with clam chowder. Their name for hard tack is pilot bread.

The clam bake proper is the main course. As a matter of fact, though, it isn't really a clam bake. It's a clam steam. The foods are steamed on seaweed spread over hot rocks.

But I'm going to tell you about that later. The main course consists of clams steamed in their shells and served with melted butter, sweet potatoes steamed in their jackets, corn on the cob, steamed lobster, little pig sausages and fresh fish steamed in paper. Sometimes you have clam fritters, too, and onions baked in pans over the fire. And, of course, you'll have plenty of Boston brown bread and sour pickles.

For dessert--if you can eat dessert after a meal like this--for dessert, custom says watermelon and coffee.

Miss Ward tells me that the people who are going to cook the clam bake go out to the picnic spot early in the morning. There they build a low platform of rocks on which they build a fire. When the rocks are hot, they scrape off the fire and put on a layer of that moist seaweed known as rock weed.

Isn't that a clever way to make an outdoor steamer? Hot rocks for the heat and seaweed to provide the steam. Next, these New England cooks lay on all the foods to be steamed. Yes, they lay them right down on the rock weed. First, the clams in their shells, then the sweet corn in husks, the sweet potatoes in their skins, the white fish cut up in individual pieces and put in paper bags, the little pig sausages wrapped in paper also.

When all this food is in place, the cooks cover it over with more rock weed and a thick piece of canvas or sailcloth. This holds in the steam. The food steams for an hour or more, depending on the size of the bake, and along about noon the guests gather for the feast.

Oh, yes, I meant to tell you about the onions. You don't steam these, because they would get too soft and go to pieces if they were left all that time under the sailcloth. So you cook them in a covered pan. They're much like baked onions.

Needless to say, the service at this kind of an outdoor meal is very simple. The Boston brown bread, the pilot bread, the pickles and the pitchers of melted butter for the clams stand on the table. As soon as the guests have finished their bowls of clam chowder, the steamed clams come on. And how do you suppose they serve these hot clams in hot shells to each person? On a big tin plate. Each guest also gets an empty tin for his discarded shells. Each shucks his own clams, dips them in melted butter and eats as he goes.

"Better not have your fingernails manicured just before going to a clam bake" advises Miss Ward. "Shucking and eating clams is a messy business. But the clams are so good that you don't mind the mess."

Did I hear a question? The steamed fish? That may be whitefish, haddock or cod or any sea fish that you can cut up in chunks or small whole fish. Yes, the fish is served on the plates right in the paper bags it is steamed in.

Once more, let me go over the real New England menu. Seems to me the custom of clam bakes could spread to any place along our coasts. Anyone living along the coast where sea food is plentiful whether it is the Atlantic or the Pacific Coast, Maine or Oregon, could give a New England clam bake. Never mind if the sea food in your part of the ocean isn't exactly like that up in Cape Cod, the cooking principles are still good. And this makes a different kind of an outdoor meal.

Once more, the menu. And then I'll give you a recipe for clam chowder. The menu:

Clam chowder with hard tack; Steamed clams with melted butter; Sweet potatoes steamed; Corn on the cob steamed; Steamed lobster; Steamed little pig sausages; and Steamed fish; Boston brown bread; pickles; and, for dessert, watermelon and coffee.

Now here's a recipe for clam chowder: nine ingredients.

1 quart shucked clams, or 2 dozen clams.	1 cup diced potatoes.
4 tablespoons diced salt pork.	1 pint milk.
1 onion, chopped.	1/2 teaspoon salt.
2 tablespoons flour.	Few drops tabasco sauce.
	Chopped parsley.

I'll repeat that list. (Repeat.)

Drain the clams from the liquor and chop or grind them fine. Strain the liquor through cheesecloth or a very fine wire strainer to remove any small pieces of shell. Crisp the finely diced salt pork and remove from the fat. Cook the onion in the fat for a few minutes, add the flour, and stir until well blended. Then add the clam liquor and the potatoes. Cook this mixture in the upper part of a double boiler until the potatoes are done. Then add the milk and the chopped clams and crisped pork. Cook for a few minutes, add the salt and the tabasco. Sprinkle finely chopped parsley over the top and serve with crackers or hard tack.

Monday: "Ways to Use Cabbage and Apples".

